

Yersiniosis

Disease Fact Sheet Series

What is yersiniosis?

Yersiniosis is a bacterial disease that generally affects the intestinal tract. The disease is relatively uncommon with approximately 35 cases being reported in Wisconsin annually. Yersiniosis usually occurs as a single isolated event, however occasional outbreaks have been reported due to a common exposure.

Who gets yersiniosis?

Any person can get yersiniosis but it occurs more often in children and young adults.

How are *Yersinia* bacteria spread?

The yersinia bacteria are spread by eating or drinking food or water contaminated with feces from an infected human or animal, or by direct contact with fecal material from an infected person or animal.

What are the symptoms of yersiniosis?

Infected people may experience fever, abdominal cramps or mild to severe diarrhea that may contain blood especially in children. Yersiniosis may mimic appendicitis, especially in adolescents and young adults.

How soon do symptoms appear after exposure to *Yersinia* bacteria?

Symptoms generally appear 3 to 7 days after exposure.

Where are the *Yersinia* bacteria found?

Animals are the main source of the bacteria that cause yersiniosis. Fecal wastes from animals may contaminate water, milk and foods and become a source of infection for people or other animals.

How long can an infected person carry *Yersinia*?

The bacteria are passed in the feces during the time the person is experiencing diarrhea and in some cases for a few weeks or months afterward. For this reason, infected people must be very careful to thoroughly wash their hands after each toilet visit.

(Over)

How is yersiniosis treated?

Most cases recover on their own without treatment. Those with severe symptoms or bloodstream infections are generally treated with antibiotics.

How can yersiniosis be prevented?

Avoid drinking raw (unpasteurized) milk and improperly treated water. Thoroughly cook meat, especially pork to an internal temperature of 150 °F. Practice good handwashing after handling animals, especially domestic pets.